

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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N2761Q CESSA 182K AIRCRAFT

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ACCIDENT NEAR CORDOVA, ALASKA,
ON MAY 29, 2021

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Interview of: JAMES FEOLA
Pilot

Via Telephone

Wednesday,
July 7, 2021

APPEARANCES:

BRICE BANNING, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

BRENT COLE
(On behalf of James Feola)

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I N T E R V I E W

MR. BANNING: And the recording has started. My name's Brice Banning. I'm a Senior Aviation Accident Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

The NTSB is an independent Federal agency charged with determining the probable cause of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety. The NTSB is not part of the DOT or the FAA, and it has no regulatory or enforcement powers.

I'd like to take a moment and have -- and go around the telephone if we could and introduce ourselves. Paul?

MR. SUFFERN: Hi, good afternoon and good morning everyone. My name is Paul Suffern, that's spelled S-U-F-F-E-R-N, and I'm a meteorologist at the National Transportation Safety Board. I've been here about ten to eleven years.

MR. BANNING: And James?

MR. FEOLA: James Feola, private pilot, been flying for eight years.

MR. BANNING: Thank you, James. And Brent?

MR. COLE: Hi, Brent Cole, I'm here on behalf of Mr. Feola.

MR. BANNING: Thank you, Brent.

Today we will be using a digital recorder to record the interview, which will then be sent for transcription. The transcript, not the audio recording, will be made part of the public docket. Are there any objections to the recording? James?

MR. FEOLA: No, no objection.

1 MR. BANNING: Thank you. Brent?

2 MR. COLE: Say again?

3 MR. BANNING: I just wanted for the record if you had any
4 objection to the recording.

5 MR. COLE: No.

6 MR. BANNING: Thank you. And Paul?

7 MR. SUFFERN: No objections.

8 MR. BANNING: Thank you.

9 The purpose of the investigation is safety, to determine
10 probable cause, and prevent reoccurrence. Our role is not to
11 assign fault, blame, or liability. This interview is part of the
12 fact-finding phase of this investigation. We cannot however,
13 offer any guarantee of confidentiality, or immunity.

14 Each of the group members will have a chance to ask
15 questions. We will ask questions one at a time, and everyone has
16 been instructed to not interrupt the person who is asking question
17 at the time. There will be the opportunity for each group member
18 to ask follow-up questions after each person has had a turn.

19 James, if you could please answer all questions to the best
20 of your recollection. If you don't understand a question or you
21 need to have it repeated or explained, it's no problem. Just let
22 us know and we will modify the question. And if you need to
23 modify an answer, please, please do so. We want to get the best
24 description of what happened as possible. So, it's no problem if
25 you need to modify an answer.

1 You are entitled, James, to have one representative of your
2 choosing. Is there someone you would like to have as a
3 representative?

4 MR. FEOLA: Yes, that's Brent Cole.

5 MR. BANNING: Thank you. Brent, you may direct James to not
6 answer a question, or to request a short break to confer. But the
7 thing we would request is you don't answer any questions on his
8 behalf. But if you need a break, you need to talk, we can go off
9 the record it's not a problem. Just let us know.

10 MR. FEOLA: Okay. I got it, and just because I want you guys
11 to understand the hesitation is that I'm putting you on mute so
12 that -- and so every time you ask me a question I've got to reach
13 over and push the mute button.

14 MR. BANNING: Yeah, no problem. No problem whatsoever.

15 All right, James -- does any -- James, do you have any
16 questions before we get started?

17 MR. FEOLA: No, I do not.

18 INTERVIEW OF JOHN SMITH

19 BY MR. BANNING:

20 Q. Okay, so we will now begin the interview. James, if you
21 wouldn't mind telling us your name for the record and maybe a
22 little bit about yourself and your flying background?

23 A. James Feola, private pilot. I've been flying for eight
24 years. Most of my flying is cross-country type flying. I
25 approximately fly like, around 100 to 150 hours per year. And

1 it's -- again, it's mainly recreational, it's -- that's it.

2 Q. Okay. Thank you, I appreciate that. Do you mind taking us
3 back to the day of the accident and telling us what transpired
4 that day? Maybe starting with your preflight duties before you
5 left Talkeetna?

6 A. Sure. This is on May 29th, early morning of May 29th,
7 actually. And preflight involved looking at weather reports that
8 morning and then evaluating the weather at our departure airport
9 and looking at weather at our destination airports that we were
10 looking at going to, and that's about it pertaining to the
11 preflight, and obviously, preflight on the aircraft itself, we
12 departed -- I'm sorry.

13 We departed at 10:55 roughly, the morning of May 29th, from
14 Talkeetna. We had a destination airport for Yakutat with a couple
15 alternative airports that were part of our flight plan, subject to
16 change. Again, based on arriving weather at those locations,
17 (indiscernible) Juno, and the other one was going to be Sitka,
18 with the ability to fly to Ketchikan, which was going to be our --
19 actually, our final stop for the day was going to be Ketchikan.
20 The other two are listed are mainly just refuel stops, they
21 weren't required for our flight, but those were what we were
22 planning on. And that's it for that, for that day.

23 Q. Okay. And do you mind telling us how the flight proceeded?
24 When you departed, your altitudes, and how the flight proceeded?

25 A. We departed Talkeetna, again, around 10:55. This was going

1 to be a VFR flight following flight to 1-2000-500. We flew
2 approximately, I want to say six -- six to ten miles south of that
3 airport before we had an opening to climb up to 1-2000-500. At 1-
4 2000-500, conditions were smooth and clear at 1-2000-500. That
5 portion of the flight lasted two hours and fifteen minutes
6 approximately, before running into severe windshear and severe
7 extreme turbulence, which then took us down at that point.

8 Q. Okay, thank you. Can you describe when you encountered the
9 severe windshear and severe turbulence? What transpired? What
10 the airplane did and what you recall of the accident sequence, if
11 you can.

12 A. Sure. At two hours and 15 minutes into the flight, we
13 dropped instantly. The plane was thrown left and right. The
14 turbulence pretty much did most of that. We were thrown --
15 actually, I could actually -- we all had seatbelts on obviously,
16 but you're moving up towards the top of the aircraft, you can feel
17 your head hitting that. It was so violent that it just threw us
18 down really quick, and there wasn't really -- there wasn't any
19 warning pertaining to that. It was just very quick when it
20 occurred.

21 Q. And after you encountered the severe turbulence and were
22 thrown around, what did the airplane do? Meaning -- can you take
23 me through what happened until the airplane impacted the glacier?

24 A. Yeah, once it was realized that we weren't going to be able
25 to get out of the windshear portion that's pushing us down, I

1 maneuvered the aircraft into the valley area which would give us
2 obviously, more safety regarding distance between us and any
3 obstacle below us. At that point, we're still being pushed down
4 all the way, but that was -- again, that was a maneuver just to
5 make sure we're not going to come down on the side of a mountain
6 at that point. What -- is there anything else you want? I mean
7 what else are you asking for here?

8 Q. Did you -- well, yeah no, I appreciate it, Jim. Do you
9 recall the vertical speed descent that you encountered from the
10 turbulence and windshear?

11 A. Yeah, that was over 2000 feet per minute.

12 Q. Over 2000, I'm sorry, I stepped on you.

13 A. Yeah. That was anywhere between 2000 and over; 2000 feet per
14 minute.

15 Q. Okay. And then as the airplane was descending and you
16 maneuvered it into the valley, can you take me to the accident
17 sequence? To where it impacted and what you -- did you ever see
18 the glacier? Things of that nature.

19 A. Yeah, below 7000 feet, there was about a 1000 foot ceiling
20 I'm going to say between the glacier and that cloud deck. Below
21 that, again, this is a very quick maneuver because you're still
22 being pushed down with only 1000 feet between you and the glacier.
23 The -- I put the aircraft in a tail down position when I knew I
24 was going to impact. Obviously, want to prevent the aircraft from
25 flipping over which would have buried us in about three to four

1 feet of snow, if it had flipped. Too, it allowed the airframe to
2 take most of the energy so that we weren't injured inside the
3 aircraft.

4 Q. And so just so I make sure I understand, Jim. You're at
5 12,500 then unexpectedly, without warning, you encountered the
6 severe turbulence and windshear. You maneuvered a quick maneuver,
7 it sounded like into the valley, and you continued in this
8 descent, uncontrolled descent, through a cloud layer that -- and
9 where -- do you remember what altitude you broke out of the cloud
10 layer where you could see the glacier?

11 A. Yeah, that was -- I want to say that was around 7000 feet.
12 Again, I'm estimating it, but I'm going to say at least 7000.

13 Q. Yeah, no problem, I understand. I appreciate it. And then
14 after the impact and the airplane came to rest, my understanding
15 is that there were minor injuries; is that correct?

16 A. I'm sorry, you broke up.

17 Q. After -- yeah no, yeah, sorry. After the impact, can you
18 describe what happened through that sequence?

19 A. Yeah, after the impact, we started getting together all of
20 our survivor gear immediately, which involved emergency tent,
21 satellite communication coms, those are made by Garmin, actually.
22 The food and water supplies that we have for emergency situations,
23 so we broke out all the emergency gear at that point.

24 Q. Okay. And at some point in there, a message was sent via
25 satellite to Rescue Coordination Center or to someone to ask for

1 help, correct?

2 A. That is correct. That transmission goes to Garmin services.
3 Garmin services relays that data and information over to rescue.

4 Q. Okay, all right. Thank you. I'd like to go back just a
5 little bit, James, if that's all right. Can you tell me the
6 purpose of the flight? Am I understanding a personal flight, you
7 guys were headed back to New York? Can you share with me a little
8 bit about the purpose of the flight?

9 A. Yeah, the purpose of the flight, we were all done with our
10 time in Alaska. We -- I think it was approximately around ten
11 days total here. We decided to come back a day early because one
12 of the locations we wanted to go to wasn't going to be available
13 to get into, so we ended up returning home on that day. That was
14 the purpose of the flight, to return.

15 Q. Okay. And you were just up seeing Alaska; is that correct?

16 A. That's correct.

17 MR. BANNING: Okay. All right. Well, I think James, what
18 I'll -- what I'd like to do is hand it over to Paul Suffern at
19 this time, and he had some questions he'd like to ask you.

20 BY. MR. SUFFERN:

21 Q. Hi, do you prefer Jim or James?

22 A. Either one, Paul, will work. No problem, either one.

23 Q. All right. Well, thank you again for your time this
24 afternoon here on the East Coast. Yeah, my questions just pertain
25 a little bit more on the weather side of things and like Brice

1 said, from whatever you can recall. You're the expert here, so
2 we're just here learning from you.

3 And so thank you for the NTSB form that you filled out, the
4 6120. It had a lot of helpful information in there and for the
5 source of weather that was checked on the pre-flight, before the
6 flight, we checked National Weather Service automated reports,
7 internet, and on-board weather. Do you recall what types of
8 information those weather sources showed before the flight?

9 A. Sure, I had winds aloft data for our en route altitude,
10 obviously, winds aloft and direction on that. I -- of course, I
11 have E-Tars (ph.). I also use -- in addition to all of the items
12 that you had listed actually, in addition to that, I also use
13 FlightPlan for weather data, which is pulled from aviation weather
14 anyway. So, it's basically the same weather report.

15 Q. Okay, and so for the internet checking, is that -- do you use
16 like your electronic flight bag and got on some websites for that?
17 Or is that --

18 A. Yeah, you're --

19 Q. -- go through flightplan.com for that?

20 A. I -- that -- most of that comes through flightplan.com and I
21 use a laptop in addition to that for other weather -- aviation
22 weather services.

23 Q. Okay. Do you recall if you reviewed the Alaska Aviation
24 Weather Unit website -- day and if they had any information that
25 was useful?

1 A. I did review some, I can't tell you exactly which one I
2 reviewed. But there is an Alaska windage, and I use that to
3 compare it with my AWC wind aloft diagrams and charts. So that
4 seems to be somewhat comparable.

5 Q. Okay, that's helpful. And then as far as the onboard
6 weather, could you kind of describe what you mean by what was
7 available for your onboard weather?

8 A. Yeah, we have ADSV onboard weather in the aircraft. We are
9 reviewing and looking at, obviously, all of our destination
10 airports for that weather while we're in route. But we were at a
11 decision point yet though at two hours and 15 minutes in, but we
12 certainly do have that capability on the aircraft.

13 Q. Okay. And you have the ability to throw -- I mean, not that
14 the Alaska Weather Radar Network isn't the best, but your onboard
15 weather, you have the ability to overlay different types of
16 weather radar or precipitation, or all those kinds of things; is
17 that the kind of display it has?

18 A. Oh yeah. There was no percipant (verbatim) in our flight
19 path, or in the area where we were here. I can tell you at
20 12,500, it was extremely smooth and visibility was certainly -- at
21 least +30 (indiscernible) beyond.

22 I will say this, approximately 53 minutes after departing
23 Talkeetna, actually we had VFR conditions at Ketchikan. And we
24 knew things were opening up, obviously towards the south because
25 these were improving down there, but that was the only indication,

1 and that was 16 -- less than 16 minutes after departure from
2 Talkeetna. We had other airports open up while we're in flight,
3 those we were able to see, including Sitka which was one of our
4 alternates.

5 Q. Okay. And then for the choosing to cruise at 12,500 feet, is
6 that -- what did you -- why did you -- why that specific altitude?
7 Just high enough to get over the mountains and low enough wind, or
8 what -- why was that altitude picked?

9 A. Yeah, the altitude was picked based on Winds Aloft data that
10 was reviewed prior to the flight. That seemed -- that was the
11 most favorable for the flight and also it was probably the safest
12 altitude based on our route path for that segment, which would
13 have allowed us to have anywhere between 4,500 to over 5,000 feet
14 clearances on any peaks within our route. So, there's two
15 reasons. One was for safety altitude about the mountain ranges,
16 and the other reason was winds aloft.

17 Q. And I believe earlier you met -- you were describing
18 (indiscernible) that you've been in Alaska for nine or ten days
19 before this. Had you flown at that altitude above any other
20 mountains that you can recall in those -- in that week plus
21 period?

22 A. During what timeframe?

23 Q. The -- in the seven to eight days prior that you were in
24 Alaska, I believe, flying around, or maybe this was just the
25 return trip. Had you flown at that altitude before, and what do

1 you recall?

2 A. Well when we were coming into -- let's see, when we were
3 coming into Alaska, we were probably around 11,000 or so. I mean,
4 I can't remember exactly -- you're asking about something ten days
5 prior to that. Altitudes are obviously based on what our flight
6 conditions are for the day, and as far as the terrain that we're
7 flying over. So, I mean, that changes on -- depending what our
8 flight is for. I mean, if you're asking me if I've ever flown at
9 12,500? Is that what you're asking me? I'm not sure what you're
10 asking here.

11 Q. Yeah, no, I apologize, and I wasn't trying to do a leading
12 question. I'm just trying to -- maybe a different question would
13 be had you encountered mountain wave conditions or turbulence like
14 this when flying over mountains before.

15 A. Oh, well yeah, that -- you want to be on the windward side,
16 obviously, if you're dealing with a mountain wave and you're
17 dealing with some windshear, so you can pick up the updraft, if --
18 I mean those are the normal -- I mean that's what you're asking me
19 -- you know that's the answer I give you, yeah.

20 MR. COLE: Hey, sorry about that, I just touched off, but
21 hey, Mr. Feola, would you just answer his question? If you don't
22 know what his question is, ask him to repeat it. You're giving a
23 lot of extraneous information and none of it is really relevant to
24 some of it -- to what he's asking. So, listen carefully --

25 MR. FEOLA: (Indiscernible).

1 MR. COLE: Just answer the question.

2 MR. FEOLA: Okay. Please ask the question again Paul,
3 because I'm not sure what you're asking here.

4 BY MR. SUFFERN:

5 Q. Yeah, no I'm just asking if you can recall encountering
6 mountain wave conditions like this before on any flight in and
7 around Alaska.

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay. And then -- so from what I understand, it was VFR
10 flight following. Do you recall, when discussing things with air
11 traffic control, if they had any pilot's information? Do you
12 recall any other information -- weather information from them
13 during your flight?

14 A. Negative, no prior (indiscernible) information.

15 Q. And no other -- they didn't provide any other weather
16 information during your flight?

17 A. No, they did not.

18 Q. Okay. And then as you're nearing two hours into the flight,
19 do you recall seeing any clouds either below -- above or below the
20 mountains and if there were clouds, what they looked like?

21 A. There were clouds, quite a few thousand feet below that were
22 somewhat broken, that's about it. Nothing at our level at 12,500.

23 Q. Okay. And do you recall any clouds above you, maybe cirrus
24 clouds that were tens of thousands of feet above you, or anything
25 above you that you can recall?

1 A. Yes, I would say tens of thousands above, yes.

2 Q. Do you recall what those clouds looked like?

3 A. No.

4 Q. And then throughout your flying career, have you seen any
5 NTSB safety alerts that you can recall?

6 A. You're talking about -- are you referring to in-flight or
7 pre-set (ph.)?

8 Q. So, National Transportation Safety Board, as part of one of
9 our missions is to get helpful information out to help out the
10 pilots for particular sequences that may be more challenging. And
11 so on occasion, we'll issue basically, a small one-page
12 publication called an NTSB Safety Alert, and I just was wondering
13 if you've -- if you can recall having seen any of that type of
14 information?

15 A. No, I -- we look at (indiscernible) and that prior to the
16 flight, but no on the -- specific on the NTSB.

17 Q. Okay. Thank you. And then just one final question for this
18 round, and again, appreciate your time. Is there anything
19 weather-wise that you wish you had as a resource after going
20 through this particular ordeal?

21 A. No, again, our on -- we do it when we have onboard weather.
22 It cannot detect windshear, the equipment we have onboard. The
23 only thing I would have -- and I did put this in the report, was
24 regarding you know PIREP information would have been really the
25 most helpful here, if there were any available. I guess that's

1 the only way I could answer that.

2 MR. SUFFERN: Okay. No, you've been -- that -- very helpful
3 information and I appreciate your time.

4 Brice and Jim, that's all the questions I have for right now.

5 MR. BANNING: Okay thank you Paul.

6 And I think I just have a couple more questions, James.

7 BY MR. BANNING:

8 Q. One is, do you -- are you able to receive PIREPs in your
9 onboard weather system?

10 A. I can repeat on the NOTAM that do come through on our system
11 (indiscernible) the NOTAMs do.

12 Q. The NOTAMs do, but not PIREPS, or do you know?

13 A. I almost -- I do not know, I can't even answer that either
14 way. I'm going to say no, I do not know on that.

15 Q. Okay, yeah, no problem I was --

16 A. PIREP is -- you usually get PIREP reports from ATC, but long
17 flight --

18 Q. Sure. And it didn't sound like you received any from ATC
19 upon this particular flight; is that correct?

20 A. That is correct.

21 Q. Okay, thank you. And then I think the only other question I
22 had James, is is there anything you think we should have asked, or
23 you think is important that we should know about that wasn't
24 asked?

25 A. I want to say no to that.

1 MR. BANNING: Okay. Okay, thank you. I'm going to check
2 with Paul and see if he has any additional follow up questions.
3 Paul?

4 MR. SUFFERN: No further questions. Thank you for your time.

5 MR. FEOLA: Thanks Paul, appreciate it.

6 MR. BANNING: And with that, I am going to go off the record
7 now. The recording is going off at 10:34 Alaska Time.

8 (Whereupon, at 10:34 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: N2716Q CESSNA 182K AIRCRAFT
 ACCIDENT NEAR CORDOVA, ALASKA
 ON MAY 29, 2021
 Interview of James Feola

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC21LA043

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: July 7, 2021

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Brittany Hay
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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N2761Q CESSA 182K AIRCRAFT

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ACCIDENT NEAR CORDOVA, ALASKA,
ON MAY 29, 2021

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Accident No.: ANC21LA043

Interview of: FRED NORTHUP
Passenger

Thursday,
July 8, 2021

APPEARANCES:

BRICE BANNING, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:14 p.m.)

MR. BANNING: It is currently started we are on the record, and it is about 12:14 Alaska Daylight Time; and my name is Brice Banning. I'm a Senior Aviation Accident Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

The NTSB is an independent Federal agency charged with determining the probable cause of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety. The NTSB is not part of the Department of Transportation, or the Federal Aviation Administration, and it has no regulatory or enforcement powers.

And I am the only one on the phone today, Fred, from the NTSB, and so, I will -- today we will be using a digital recorder to record the interviews which will be then sent for transcription. The transcript, not the audio recording, will be made a part of the public docket. Do you have any objection to the digital recording, Fred?

MR. NORTHUP: No.

MR. BANNING: Thank you. The purpose of the investigation is safety, to determine probable cause, and prevent recurrence. Our role is not to assign fault, blame or liability. This interview is a part of the fact-finding phase of the investigation; we cannot, however, offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity.

Please answer all questions to the best of your recollection.

1 If you don't understand a question just let me know, I'll repeat
2 it or try to explain it. If you realize you've misstated or need
3 to modify an answer, it's no problem just let me know and please
4 modify the answer.

5 You are entitled to have one representative of your
6 choosing. Is there someone you would like to have as a
7 representative, Fred?

8 MR. NORTHUP: No.

9 MR. BANNING: Okay, thank you. And do you have any questions
10 before we proceed?

11 MR. NORTHUP: No.

12 INTERVIEW OF FRED NORTHUP

13 BY MR. BANNING:

14 Q. Okay. And so we will now -- basically Fred, do you mind just
15 introducing yourself on the record, first and last name, and then
16 maybe telling us -- telling me a little bit about your aviation
17 background?

18 A. Sure. I'm -- my name is Fred Northup. I'm what you call a
19 rescue pilot. I got my private pilot in -- somewhere around 1986
20 or 88', and flew for a few years and belonged to a club, and life
21 got in way, then in '94 I sold my membership, and I really didn't
22 fly again until 2018, and I bought Kitfox 7. I flew that for a
23 couple of months and kind of twisted it up on a landing one day,
24 and I then got out of it for a month or two, and I bought another
25 one I've been flying ever since. I now have 640, roughly, hours

1 and now I -- that's about it. I mean, I mostly fly local, I've
2 done a few cross countries and that's about it.

3 Q. And my understanding, Fred, is that you were a passenger on a
4 182 that departed Talkeetna that ran into some problems. Do you
5 -- can you tell me -- my understanding is that you guys were up --
6 had left New York and were up seeing Alaska. Can you tell me a
7 little bit about the purpose of the original flight? Why you guys
8 -- did -- you -- how you came to Alaska?

9 A. Yeah. Jim and I and another guy had been talking about it
10 for a year or so, a trip, and I wanted to go to Alaska, and so Jim
11 said gee, I'd like to go too, and so we decided we'd fly the 182
12 up there, so.

13 So, we did -- he did extensive checkups on it, made sure it
14 was all ready to go and he keeps his plane in really good
15 condition, and so we took off and headed to Idaho first, and then
16 up to Ketchikan, and then up to Homer. We spent several days at
17 Homer just flying around the different little airports up there.

18 And then third guy that was with us, he headed home
19 commercial from Anchorage. Jim and I then proceeded up to
20 Talkeetna where we flew up around up there for a couple days, and
21 then weather coming in south of us kept us from heading back to
22 Ketchikan. So we stayed there for a few days and then the weather
23 improved, and we decided we'd head south, and that's about it.

24 Q. And do you remember when you left New York to come to Alaska?

25 A. Do I remember when? Yeah.

1 Q. Yeah, the day?

2 A. Yeah, I think it was on the 21st of June.

3 Q. Okay. All right. And can you tell me about the accident
4 flight, just what transpired. Maybe starting back if you were
5 involved in any of the preflight activities, looking at weather
6 and just tell me what transpired, what you recollect on that
7 flight?

8 A. I mean we -- he spent several hours planning the flight and
9 preplanning with the weather, and I can't remember the sites he
10 goes to. I think 1-800 and weather brief (ph.) and he goes to the
11 aviation sites from the government. I used ForeFlight, and I
12 didn't go into it nearly as extensive as him, but -- so that was
13 in basically the preflight. We set it up right in the beginning
14 that if we saw any kind of bad weather, icing, turbulence,
15 whatever, we were coming back to Talkeetna, so. That was about it
16 for preflight. He checked -- well, he did check over the plane,
17 we both actually looked over the plane, everything seemed good.
18 We put full fuel onboard at Sheldon Flight Service there, and we
19 took off.

20 Q. And do you know -- and if you don't, it's no problem. But do
21 you know how much fuel the airplane holds, the 182?

22 A. I think 70 gallons maybe? I'm not sure.

23 Q. Okay, no problem.

24 A. I know he has about a 1,000-mile range with it, depending on
25 the wind.

1 Q. Okay. And then after you departed Talkeetna?

2 A. Yeah?

3 Q. And can you tell me about the flight? How the flight --
4 sure.

5 A. Yeah, I mean like I said, we planned that if we ran into any
6 trouble, we'd just go back. So, we headed kind of southwest maybe
7 of the airport and it was -- I think clouds were kind of broken
8 and scattered and we just worked our way up through until we got
9 on top of the worst stuff, and that was about it. Flew -- we were
10 in a layer of about 12,500, we were on flight following to
11 Anchorage, and there was no icing, there was calm winds, kind of
12 variable, and it was just an uneventful flight. We kept looking
13 out for icing and so on and watching the -- our airspeed. I
14 couldn't -- I can't see the airspeed of his plane, but I can see
15 the GPS.

16 Q. And so, you were VFR on top at 12,000 something --

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Do you remember --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Do you remember the height of the ceiling of the cloud layer
21 below you?

22 A. It was between 10,000 and 11,000.

23 Q. Okay. And then as the -- can you walk me through the
24 accident sequence? When it -- when you first ran into trouble and
25 what happened?

1 A. Yeah. Okay, like I said, it was pretty uneventful. It was
2 smooth as can be. No icing and we were out maybe somewhere around
3 two hours into it, and we were starting to prepare if we were
4 going to be able to get into Yakutat or not. So, if we were going
5 to have to go on to the next alternative and -- so we were just
6 about ready to crest the mountains there basically, and airspeed
7 started to slow down on the GPS -- I mean ground speed started to
8 slow down and he said we're into some windshear, and then I
9 started -- the altimeter starting going backwards and we both knew
10 that this was not a good place to lose altitude.

11 So he just kept trying to get his altitude back and then it
12 -- we got pulled down into the clouds and I remember the plane
13 getting all twisted around and I'm assuming we got into a rotary
14 off of those mountains or something, and I remember him saying he
15 got it leveled out. He said all right, let's look for lower,
16 flatter terrain, so that's what we did on the GPS, and he said all
17 right, we're going to head for that and the next thing I knew, I
18 woke up with snow in my mouth, so.

19 Q. Do you remember seeing them breaking out of that bottom layer
20 of clouds as you were being pushed down?

21 A. I do not. I was -- I wasn't really looking outside of that
22 plane there, but --

23 Q. Sure, no problem, yeah. No, I completely understand.

24 A. That's one thing I've been trained was if we do get into
25 clouds, don't be looking outside, so.

1 Q. And do you remember the -- seeing the glacier at all, or any
2 of the impact with the glacier?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. No.

6 Q. And then if you don't mind, can you tell me what happened a
7 little bit after you realized you had -- you were in the snow,
8 that you had impacted the ground, how you -- my understanding is
9 you set out a satellite message? Can you walk me through a little
10 bit of that, if you're comfortable?

11 A. Sure. Sure, I -- when I woke up, like I said, there was snow
12 in my face and I knew right away what had happened. And he was
13 kind of draped over the top of me. So, I woke him up and he got
14 off of me and got out first, and I had to finagle with my seatbelt
15 a little bit to get that undone and I stood up and stepped out the
16 -- I think I stepped out the windshield, that side of the
17 windshield, but -- and I went to walk, and my left foot was
18 totally just -- I couldn't step on it at all, so.

19 I then reached straight in by -- I always carry my inReach
20 right next to me or on me, and it was right next to my seat. I
21 reached in, luckily that was still there. I grabbed that and
22 immediately sent the SOS, and I looked around and saw it was a
23 pretty bleak, scary place, and it looked a lot colder than it was,
24 luckily. And I said, all right well, we got to get our -- I had
25 brought all kinds of survival stuff, everything from -- I had a

1 shotgun in there because I figured if we went down we were going
2 to be worrying about bears, that was -- you see all the -- what
3 goes on up there and -- anyway.

4 So I had a shotgun in there, which I could not find anyways.
5 We did find his winter jacket, but I couldn't find mine. It was
6 right behind the seat, but it was snow in there and stuff, and I
7 couldn't find it and I couldn't really climb around in there with
8 my foot bad. And I could see all of our gear was scattered out in
9 the snowfield maybe 50 to 100 feet away. And I told him, because
10 he could walk, I said well, we need to try and go out there and
11 get that survival bag.

12 In the meantime, he's found I had a four seasons -- like, a
13 mountain climbing tent that I brought with me, but it was
14 lightweight, it's like what they use on Denali and stuff. And so
15 he did find that, he gave that to me, so I got that kind of set
16 up, I tied it to the plane.

17 We did find our big duffle bag that had our clothes in it.
18 We grabbed them out of the plane, we threw them in the tent
19 because I figured we can lay on top of those so we wouldn't be
20 right on the ice and we got in -- we couldn't get at my survival
21 bag that had food and stuff in it, and first aid stuff, so. I was
22 cut on my forehead so I put some snow on that, held snow on that
23 for a while. And it seemed like it stopped bleeding, so I wrapped
24 the -- a shirt around it and tied it, and we then got whatever we
25 could get out of the plane and went into the tent and with that

1 inReach, I could communicate with the Garmin Center somewhat, but
2 I had hard time seeing the little screen on it. So, we were
3 having a hard time with that.

4 So, we just kept doing that and a few hours later, we heard
5 the helicopters trying to get to us. And the weather -- I knew
6 the weather was an issue and first night wasn't bad, it doesn't
7 get dark there until like, midnight. So -- but the wind did come
8 up, and I did get a little bit cold when the wind blew. I had to
9 keep putting the flaps of the tent down because you couldn't stake
10 it into anything until it covered with enough snow to hold it
11 down. We kept communicating with Garmin and he -- they were
12 communicating with my family and stuff and so. We got through the
13 first night.

14 Second day, it was pretty sunny out. We were surprised they
15 couldn't get up to us. They -- I got out in the early afternoon
16 out of the tent, and there was a C-130 flying around and I wanted
17 to see if I could get anything out of the plane. Find if we had
18 water and stuff behind the seat in a cooler. So, I couldn't find
19 any of that in the plane, but then I looked right next to the tent
20 and there was a bottle of water, bottle of soda, and a bottle --
21 and a can of Bud Light. So, I gave him the water because he was
22 not doing great. I don't know, I think he was probably getting
23 the hypothermia, and so I gave him the bottle of water and I drank
24 the soda and I kept filling it with snow and -- survival mode, and
25 waited for rescue.

1 Q. Sure. And was it -- did -- the weather -- can you describe,
2 or do you remember the weather conditions on the glacier there
3 shortly after the impact? After the accident?

4 A. Yeah, there was clouds about halfway up the mountains from
5 us, so I would say -- but it was really misty and damp, almost
6 like a rainy feeling in the air where we were. But the actual
7 clouds looked like they were maybe 500 to 800 feet above us; the
8 bottom of those clouds.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So, we were right on the cusp of it. If we could have
11 maintained altitude at that point, we broke out of the clouds, he
12 could -- he would have definitely saved the aircraft. From there,
13 we could have flew right out -- (indiscernible) right out over the
14 glacier, and right out of the mountains, so.

15 Q. Do you remember -- if you go back to before you encountered
16 the turbulence and the windshear, do you recall seeing any clouds
17 around? I mean number one, could you see the mountain top
18 sticking through the clouds? Do you recall?

19 A. Before we went in?

20 Q. Yeah, before -- right before you encountered -- shortly
21 before you encountered the turbulence and the windshear; so when
22 you were flying -- when you in --

23 A. No.

24 Q. There were no wind --

25 A. I never saw any terrain until we --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Until we landed.

3 Q. Okay, and do you remember seeing any clouds around that time?
4 Was there high cirrus above you? Was there -- do you remember
5 seeing any standing lenticular? Any type of clouds that you
6 recall?

7 A. Yeah, the sun was I would say like, scattered clouds above
8 us.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But at some point, the -- sometimes, the sun was beating
11 right on the plane and at other times, it was in a shade. But
12 yeah, we were right -- I think we were right near the top of the
13 -- very top of it, but I -- it's hard to tell.

14 Q. Okay. And when and I think -- yeah, I think you've already
15 answered, this was one of the questions we've had. If you weren't
16 able to see any blowing snow if you couldn't see any terrain; is
17 that correct?

18 A. Right.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. We didn't see any snow. It snowed during the night that
21 first night, but it was like a warm, wet, slushy snow.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So it -- it would been -- it wasn't even freezing on the tent
24 or anything. Like I said, I -- like my feet were soaking wet, but
25 they never got cold.

1 Q. Okay. Okay.

2 A. So, I think it was probably in the 30s up there, but the wind
3 would -- when the wind came up it -- we got kind of cold, but ---

4 Q. Sure.

5 A. I think he was being cold just from being on the ice, but --

6 Q. Sure. Sure. Do -- on your trip that started in New York and
7 came to Alaska, did you encounter any other conditions similar to
8 what you encountered on the accident flight?

9 A. Um.

10 Q. Such as mountain wave conditions, turbulence, anything of
11 that nature?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. No, that kind of surprised me. I don't like the mountain, I
15 don't like flying in the mountains, so I -- like I said, that's
16 not something that I do personally. But yeah, we flew -- came up
17 out of Idaho and we were in 10,000-foot mountains there, and it
18 was basically smooth. 182 is a very stable airplane, I'm used to
19 the little airplanes that would get jumped (ph.) around all the
20 time, but -- yeah, and going over the mountains in Northern
21 British Columbia, I mean, that was kind of spooky but smooth as
22 could be.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So, I mean I -- we never had any mountain waves the whole
25 way.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And even coming back, I mean, that was one of the things in
3 his plan that we were going to be 3 to 4 thousand feet over the
4 terrain so mountain waves, we figured would not be a factor, so.

5 Q. And have you -- in your previous flying, have you ever
6 encountered any mountain wave conditions back on the East Coast or
7 anything?

8 A. Yeah, I've flown into Vermont into -- I don't know if you've
9 ever heard of the Ice Run Lane in New Hampshire. I've flown there
10 a couple of times, and I've felt the mountain waves, but not --
11 you come up, and it kind of slows you down, and then you go over
12 to the other side and you speed up. But, never got into any rover
13 -- rotaries or anything like that.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I mean, in the Adirondacks and when we fly with skis,
16 sometimes, you'll get some off of the hills, but nothing that you
17 can't fly right through. I don't fly in bad days anyways, I have
18 -- my limits are set pretty low. If the winds in the mountains
19 are going to be more than maybe eight to ten miles an hour, I
20 won't go, so.

21 Q. Sure, sure. Were you -- on your trip, did -- do you recall
22 if -- not necessarily the accident flight, but on this trip that
23 originated in New York. Do you recall if you guys looked at any
24 of the weather camera systems in Alaska? Do you --

25 A. Yeah, Jim was looking at them all the time. I mean, the

1 thing is, is we were usually flying quite high so the cameras
2 really didn't help us except for were if we were going to -- we --
3 he was looking where we might be landing somewhere, but it was
4 always nice or we didn't go.

5 Q. Sure. Okay. Do you remember, Fred, and if not it's all
6 right, it's not a problem. But do you remember, or do you have an
7 idea of what the elevation was on the mountain where you impacted?

8 A. I thought it was somewhere between 75,000, 108,000 but I got
9 talking to the -- one of the pilots of the Pave Hawks, and he
10 thought he were around 6,500, but --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I thought we were a little higher than that, but --

13 Q. Back to the accident flight. Prior to the -- hitting the
14 turbulence and the windshear, was there anything about that flight
15 that you were uncomfortable with?

16 A. There was some predicted icing, that -- which is why we said
17 if we hit any icing at all we were heading back, so. That was
18 about -- like I told you, I'm not comfortable flying over big
19 mountains anyways.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So, I would never do it myself.

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. If I went up there, I would probably go to the route to
24 Canada.

25 Q. Okay, yeah. And it was a visual flight rules flight,

1 correct?

2 A. Correct, yes.

3 Q. Okay. And have you, or are you, familiar with -- have you
4 looked at throughout your flying career and training any of the
5 NTSB's safety alerts, or do what they are?

6 A. I do get some on my computer but that's not all that -- I
7 don't know -- I guess I don't know what you're referring to
8 though.

9 Q. Yeah, they're safety alerts that the NTSB puts out to notify
10 pilots of different items and maybe -- like one I believe is
11 called Mastering Mountain Flying and I just was curious --

12 A. Oh yeah, yeah.

13 Q. If you had --

14 A. I watch those things all the time, yeah.

15 Q. And is there -- I think that's about the extent of my
16 questions, Fred. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that
17 you feel like I should have?

18 A. Not really.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Like, I mean, I -- if I had to make an observation, I would
21 just say it was surprising that they don't have some kind of
22 weather reporting in that area. Along that whole mountain range,
23 you'd think they would have -- when you look at the winds that --
24 it avoids those areas. When you look at the winds aloft and
25 stuff, they have them down by the ocean, they have them over on

1 the other side, but nothing on top of the mountain. Surprising
2 they don't have weather stations up there.

3 Q. And I think that was another question. Is there anything on
4 -- and you just answered it, I think. But is there anything that
5 you can think of weather-wise that would have been beneficial to
6 you in making decisions about this flight?

7 A. Well, PIREPs. I mean we're all lazy about -- and afraid to
8 go and talk to ACC and tell them about PIREPs, but I mean, you
9 just -- and most of the planes flying over that probably were not
10 at our level, they were probably way up higher than us, but like I
11 said, they just weren't -- you just -- it's surprising that there
12 wasn't any kind of warnings coming off the ocean all the way up
13 that mountain range and down the other side that there was no
14 report of this kind of wind, I mean. I mean I understand the
15 mountains have their own, but I mean, that wind must have been 80
16 miles an hour to slow that 17 -- 182 down.

17 Q. Okay. Well, I sure appreciate you being willing to visit
18 with us, I'm glad you guys are all right.

19 A. Yeah.

20 MR. BANNING: And I am going to stop the recording at 12:44
21 Alaska Daylight Time.

22 (Whereupon, at 12:44 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: N2716Q CESSNA 182K AIRCRAFT
 ACCIDENT NEAR CORDOVA, ALASKA
 ON MAY 29, 2021
 Interview of Fred Northup

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC21LA043

DATE: July 8, 2021

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Brittany Hay
Transcriber